



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ADVISORY

Welcome Home Celebration planned for National Guard artillery soldiers at Fort McCoy Saturday

Another 426th Regiment soldier served two overseas tours — one in Afghanistan and one in Iraq

More than 18 months after they left Wisconsin for extended active duty service at Fort Sill, Okla., 11 soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 426th Regiment are now home and will be honored for their service this weekend. Another soldier from the regiment will be recognized for tours in both Afghanistan and Iraq along with three soldiers who served active duty tours at Fort Sill from February 2003 until February 2004.

Brig. Gen Kerry Denson will lead a "welcome home" celebration for unit members and their families Saturday afternoon [Feb. 4] at the Wisconsin Military Academy at Fort McCoy. Denson is the commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 7,700 soldiers.

The welcome home celebration will include a "Freedom Salute" ceremony to honor the soldiers and will also recognize the soldiers' families and others who provided support while they served. The brief program will begin at 2:00 p.m. Entertainment will be provided by the National Guard's 132nd Army Band of Madison.

The artillery soldiers are based at the Wisconsin Military Academy at Fort McCoy. Three were mobilized in February of 2003 for a one-year tour at the Oklahoma artillery post. Five were mobilized in mid-June 2004 and the remaining six were ordered to active duty three weeks later. Their mission was conducting field artillery courses for more than 4,000 soldiers training in field artillery tactical data systems and artillery fire support.

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Another 426th soldier served in Afghanistan as an adviser to the Afghan national army from September 2003 until October 2004. He also deployed to Iraq in August 2005, serving with the 278th Regimental Combat Team of the Tennessee National Guard and, later, the 80th Division, a U.S. Army Reserve institutional training division headquartered in Virginia.

With the return of the 426th Regiment soldiers, the Wisconsin Guard still has approximately 2,000 soldiers and airmen on active duty. Of those, about 1,780 are currently deployed overseas and 100 others are bound for Southwest Asia after they complete training at Fort Sill, Okla., Fort Hood, Texas, and Camp Shelby, Miss. Another unit, the 1157th Transportation Company of Oshkosh, received an active duty order that will begin in mid-June.

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EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: News media organizations are welcome to cover this event at the Wisconsin Military Academy, 90 S. 10th Ave, Fort McCoy. Prior arrangements are not required.

Access to the Academy will be through Fort McCoy Gate #15, the east gate on Hwy. 21. Please do NOT use the Main Gate.

The formal ceremony will begin promptly at 2:00 p.m. and will be relatively brief. Music will be provided by a brass quintet from the Guard's 132nd Army Band. News media may photograph the event and interview consenting soldiers and families. Lt. Col. Tim Donovan, Wisconsin National Guard state public affairs officer, will be on hand to assist media. He can be reached the day of the event on his cell phone, 608-516-1777.

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